



Spruce Brook Road
Near Spruce Brook
1795

Picture from Wikipedia



Simeon North Pistol Factory

Washed away in a flood

factory stones part of north side Spruce Brook Road bridge

part of archaeological dig

National Register of Historic Places

1935 Susqui-Centennial Celebration of the Town of Berlin – Berlin Old Houses.

1795 North's pistol factory first official pistol maker in USA made here

Genealogy

Col. Simeon North (1765-1852) son of Jedediah North & Sarah Wilcox. In 1786 he married Lucy Savage (1766-1811). In 1812 he married Lydia Huntington (1771-1840) and moved to Middletown_ He had children: Reuben, Jane, Alvin, Selah, Elizabeth Lucretia, Simeon, Nancy, and Lydia. In 1795 he purchased a sawmill from Eben & Isaac Dudley on Spruce Brook and made scythes. He is known as a pistol maker for the US Government,

4th child of Jedediah and Sarah [Wilcox] North. Baptized at Kensington Congregational Church. Married 1st Lucy Savage; married 2nd Lydia Huntington. During 1795 purchased an old Sawmill from Eben and Isaac Dudley on Spruce Brook and began making scythes. In 1808 built 2 story addition above basement and had forging room. Bridge south of factory as dam and gangway to reach 1st floor. About 1800 he developed system of standard interchangeable pistol parts and became 1st official pistol maker for U.S. government. Also made bayonets, horse pistols and rifles. During 1813 young men working for Simeon North, pistol maker of Berlin, earned \$6 or \$8 a month as apprentices and would receive \$12 a month as skilled hands. Board could be had at \$1.50 to \$2 per week. Simeon was a Lieutenant Colonel from 1811-1813. During War of 1812 President Madison visited factory to urge the company to increase and produce arms faster. Commissioned after war by CT to make 2 pair gold mounted pistols to be presented to Capt. Isaac Hull of Frigate Constitution and Commodore McDonough, who captured the English squadron under Commodore Downes on Lake Champlain. During 1815, he sat in Box 16, Kensington Congregational Church. 1790 Census 2 free white males of 16 yrs and upward including heads of families 2 free white males under 16 1 free white female North Genealogy by Dexter North - p.44,79-82, 142 Berlin Records - p.44, 166 Brandegee - p.39, 54 Beers - p.625 North, Catherine - p.29, 32, 36

Wikipedia

1795

The **Simeon North Factory Site** is a historic archaeological site in East Berlin.. It encompasses the remnants of an early gun factory of the pioneering manufacturer Simeon North.

Simeon North (1765-1852) was a native of Berlin, and in June 1795 purchased an interest in a local sawmill. He adapted the site to the manufacture of scythes, and also used it as a manufacturing site for a contract awarded to him by the United States government for the purchase of firearms with interchangeable parts. It was the first contract of this type issued by the government, and North's innovations in the production of firearms are considered significant. In 1805 purchased the remaining shares of the mill, and erected a two-story factory on the site. North is believed to have primarily manufactured pistols at this site, although parts for muskets and rifles may also have been produced here for assembly elsewhere. Work ceased at this site in 1842-3, and the building was reported to be in deteriorated condition 15 years later. A flood eventually washed away the remains of the above-ground structure.^[2]

The site is located on private property adjacent to a stream, including a dam that now supports a roadway. A portion of the main mill foundation stands on the stream's western bank below the dam, with a rubble pile of stone remains up to six feet high; these features are visible from the road. Archaeological investigation of the site in the 1980s uncovered more than 900 artifacts, including many metal items. Among these were pistol parts such as springs, pistol cocks, and triggers.^[2]

Hartford Courant Dec 23, 2014 by Christopher Hoffman

BERLIN – In 1781, when Simeon North was just 16, he shouldered his musket and walked all the way from his Berlin home to Old Saybrook to enlist in the Continental Army.

As luck would have it, North arrived at the recruiting station not long after the decisive American victory at Yorktown, according to a book written in 1913 by his descendents. Believing the Revolutionary War was over, the officer in charge declined to enlist him, the book says.

North would never serve in the military, but would play an outsized role in equipping it. Years later, he would become the nation's first official pistol maker, supplying the U.S. Army and Navy with tens of thousands handguns and rifles over more than 50 years.

In the process, North helped pioneer interchangeable parts in manufacturing and is credited with creating the first milling machine. Surviving exemplars of his pistols are very rare and much sought after today. In recognition of the elegance and craftsmanship of North's firearms, the [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) holds two of his flintlock dueling pistols in its permanent collection.

While his more famous contemporary Eli Whitney – another gunmaker – also led the way in the use of interchangeable parts, many historians say North's contributions to early manufacturing were nearly as significant. North's self-effacing nature and willingness to freely share his innovations may have led to his smiting by history.

Descended from a long line of Connecticut Yankees, North began life like most 18th century residents of the Nutmeg State, as a farmer. In 1795, he branched out, starting a mill on his Berlin property to make scythes.

In 1799, he received his first government contract to make pistols for the military. More contracts followed, and it was during these years that he showed his mechanical genius, improving the weapons and introducing interchangeable parts.

During the War of 1812, the government faced a shortage of pistols. In 1813, it contracted with North buy 20,000 of what became known as the 1817 model pistol. It is the first known contract to specify that weapons have interchangeable parts, according to the New England Antique Arms Society.

To meet growing demand, North set up a second factory in Middletown. The size of the contract led him and his sons to create the first milling machine to ease and speed production.

In the 1820s, North began producing rifles. He and his sons continued making firearms for the government in Middletown and Berlin until his death in 1852 at the age of 87.

In their 1913 book, "Simeon North: First Official Pistol Maker of the United States," his descendents say that his two greatest personal characteristics were his modesty and his perseverance.

"Judged by certain modern standards, his life was a failure; for he left no fortune, although he could easily have done so had his standard of personal honor been less rigid," his descendents wrote. "Judged from every other point of view, here was a life that may well serve as a lesson and an example. It was a life dedicated to the making and improvement of a particular article of which his country stood greatly in need.



1813 model pistol